

Message Text

SECRET

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43

ACTION SS-30

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R 110920Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6709

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

S E C R E T JIDDA 1891

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SA, LE, EAID, PDEV

SUBJECT: SAUDI SUPPORT FOR AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
OF BEIRUT

1. IN THE LAST MONTH I HAVE BEEN APPROACHED
"PRIVATELY AND UNOFFICIALLY" BY THREE TRUSTEES
OF THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT. ALL HAVE
SAID THEY WERE CONTACTING ME ON THEIR OWN AND
I PRESUME THERE WAS NO COORDINATION. THEY ALL
DESCRIBED THE DIFFICULTIES THE UNIVERSITY IS
FACING, PARTICULARLY SINCE THE SUCCESSIVE DOLLAR
DEVALUATIONS. THEY SAID THE UNIVERSITY WILL SOON
SELL SOME LAND; THIS WILL TAKE IT THROUGH
THE PRESENT YEAR, BUT AFTER JULY '75 IT WILL SURVIVE
ONLY BY DEVOURING ITSELF.

2. THEY SAY THE MEDICAL SCHOOL AND HOSPITAL ARE
SACROSANCT, THAT THERE WILL HAVE TO BE SOME
SORT OF A LIBERAL ARTS, PRE-MED PROGRAM
AND
THIS WILL LEAVE THE ENGINEERING AND AGRICULTURAL
SCHOOLS FOR ABOLISHMENT. THEY INSIST (AND I CON-
CUR) THAT AUB HAS THE BEST ENGINEERING SCHOOL IN
THE ARAB WORLD AND THE ONLY REAL MODERN SCHOOL
OF AGRICULTURE IN THE AREA. THEY SAY THIS IS
IRONICAL AND BITTER GIVEN THE BILLIONS OF EXCESS

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CURRENCY NOT IN USE IN THE MIDDLE EAST, PARTI-

CULARLY IN SAUDI ARABIA, AND THIS LEADS THEM TO
THEIR PITCH.

3. THEY SAY AUB OFFICIALS HAVE REPEATEDLY AP-
PROACHED KING FAISAL OF SAUDI ARABIA FOR
MONEY AND ALWAYS HAVE BEEN TURNED DOWN ON THE
GROUNDS THAT AUB IS A HOTBED FOR PALES-
TINIAN RADICALS AND COMMUNISTS. (I SUSPECT THAT
PART OF THE KING'S DISLIKE OF THE UNIVERSITY IS
THE SOCIAL FREEDOM IT ENCOURAGES, AND PERHAPS,
EVEN MORE, ITS CHRISTIAN ORIGINS.) IN ANY CASE,
THE TRUSTEES HAVE REFERRED TO MY ALLEGED INFLU-
ENCE WITH FAISAL AND HAVE ASKED ME TO INTER-
VENE WITH THE KING ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSITY.HN
I HAVE GIVEN THEM NO
ENCOURAGEMENT.

3. ACTION REQUESTED: WHAT IS THE DEPARTMENT'S
POSITION IN THE FUTURE OF AUB? IS THE SURVIVAL
OF THE UNIVERSITY REALLY IN QUESTION? IS THIS
OF IMPORTANCE TO US, AND SHOULD I ASK THE KING
OR OTHER SAUDIS FOR ASSISTANCE?
AKINS

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